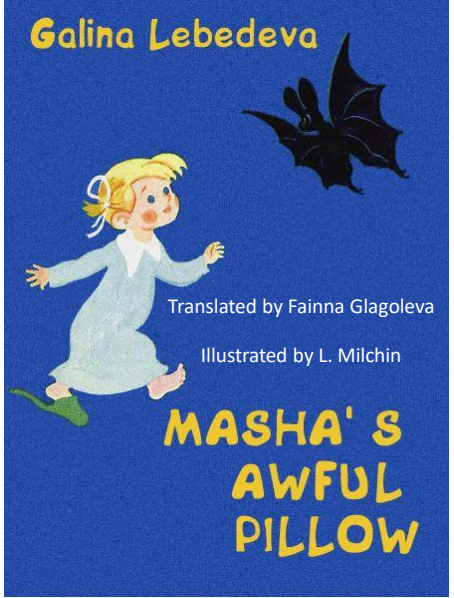
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MASHA' S AWFUL PILLOW

Mother put her daughter Masha to bed, tucked her in, turned off the light and left the room.

Masha lay there for a while, but she could not fall asleep. First she felt hot, then the bed seemed hard, and besides, her pillow was too big and bulky. Masha became angry. She pummelled the pillow, grumbling, “Oh, you awful, hot, lumpy thing!”

Then she began kicking her blanket until it landed on the floor. “Get off me, you heavy, scratchy old thing!”

Masha slid, off the bed and stamped her foot. “I hate this bed! And I don’t want to sleep! Sleeping is so dull!”

She stuck her feet into her slippers and tiptoed out of the room. It was quiet in her mother’s room. Masha stood there listening for a while. Then she went over to the outside door and down the porch steps.

What fun it was not to be sleeping!

She skipped down the path. Tyavka stuck his head out of his kennel and growled, “Grr-rr! Who’s there?”

“It’s me, Masha.”

“Why aren’t you asleep? It’s very late.”

“I can’t sleep in my awful bed. I’m mad at it. I won’t ever sleep in it again.”

“Right you are,” Tyavka said. “There’s nothing like a kennel for a good night’s sleep. There’s soft fresh hay to lie on, and the minute you curl up you’ll have wonderful dreams. Come on in!”

“Oh, what fun!”

Tyavka got out to make room for her. Masha dropped to her knees and crawled in. She tried to curl up, but it wasn’t comfortable at all, it was stuffy and hard. Then Tyavka stuck his head inside. He had a bone in his mouth.

“Here, this is for you. It will make your dreams delicious.”

“Thank you,” Masha said, crawling back out. “I think you have a very nice house, but I don’t feel like sleeping in it.”

“Aren’t you choosey!” Tyavka sounded hurt.

Masha ran off towards the chicken coop to see if Speckled Hen had laid a speckled egg for her.

The minute she opened the door, Peter-Cock ruffled his feathers, turned his head this way and that and said. “What do you want?” in a very stern voice.

“I’ve come to ask whether Speckled Hen has laid a speckled egg for me.”

“Ca-ca-can’t you be more patient!” He sounded really angry. “The hens lay white eggs. Speckled eggs are very rare. Go on back to bed.”

“I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“I’m mad at my bed. It’s hot and lumpy.”

I agree. There’s nothing like a good perch for a good night’s rest. We snuggle close together and keep each other warm. Come on up!”

Masha finally managed to climb up onto the perch. She sat there all hunched up, with a hen warming her on one side and Peter-Cock warming her on the other. It was really nice.

But the moment Masha closed her eyes, she tumbled off the perch. It was a good thing there was some straw below and she did not get hurt.

She rushed out of the chicken coop and ran back to the house. But she didn’t go inside. She sat down on the porch steps. A bird flew by and landed with a plop on her lap. It was a funny looking bird.

“Hello. Who are you?”

“I’m a bat. I sleep in your attic in the daytime and fly about at night. Why aren’t you sleeping?”

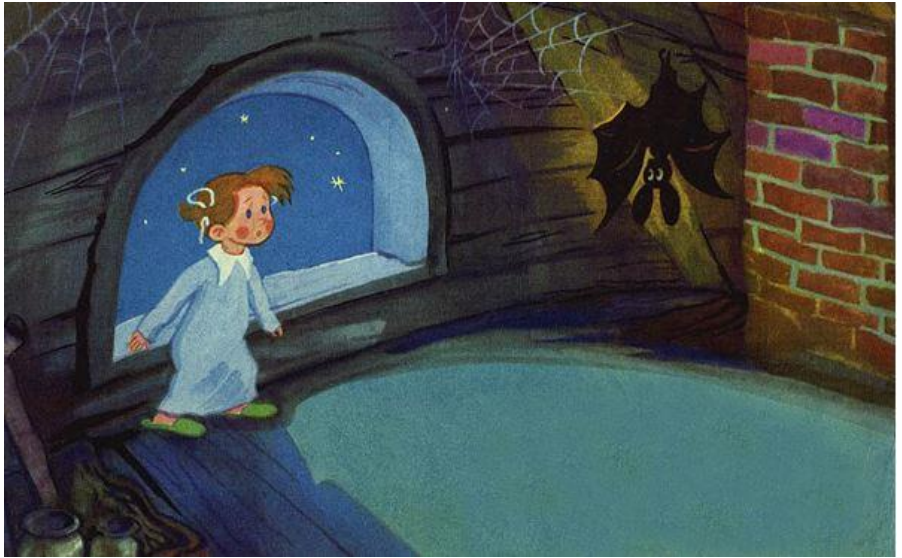
“My bed isn’t comfortable.”

“Oh, that’s too bad. Would you like me to help you?”

“Yes.”

“Then follow me up to the attic.”

The bat flapped its wings and sailed into the attic through a small window. Masha climbed up the wooden ladder after it.



“Here’s my bedroom.”

“But where’s your bed?”

“That’s just it,” the bat said and laughed. “I don’t need a bed. I get right up under the rafters, grab hold of that big nail and hang there upside-down. Come on up. I’ll let you have my special nail.”

Masha recalled the way she had tumbled off the perch in the chicken coop and rubbed her sore knee.

“How will I ever be able to sleep upside-down?” she wondered. I’ll certainly fall on my head! And this attic is awfully musty.”

“Well?” said the bat.

Masha did not reply. She was already climbing slowly down the shaky ladder. Then she crawled through a hole in the fence and headed towards the pond. The frogs stopped croaking in fright. Splash, splash, they went into the water.

Old Heron flapped her wings in fright, but when she saw it was only a little girl she calmed down. “Why are you tramping about here, scaring my frogs?”

“I’m not sleepy.”

“He-he-he!” Heron coughed, and you could tell she had a cold. “I thought just old ladies like me can’t sleep at night. It’s my rheumatism from all this dampness. What’s bothering you?”

“Nothing,” Masha said uncomfortably. “It’s just awfully dull to go to bed every night.”

“Yes, I know that. Well then, come on into the reeds over here and we’ll be friends. I’ll treat you to a frog, and then you can stand on one leg in the mud next to me. I’ll cover you with my wing.”

“I’m scared of frogs,” Masha whimpered. “And the water’s wet! I don’t want to sleep in your house at all.”

“Cry-baby!” Heron said angrily. “Then go away! There’s enough dampness here without your tears.”

Masha turned back to the house. “A pond’s an awfully cold and wet place to sleep in, she thought. “Wouldn’t it be lovely to be in bed now, under a nice warm blanket. And it’s not scratchy at all. It’s really a lovely blanket. And my pillow’s so soft.”

Masha reached the house and tiptoed into her room. She picked the blanket up off the floor, smoothed her pillow and hopped into her warm bed.

Then she yawned and said, “I don’t think anyone in the whole world has a nicer bed than me!